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THE ANTI-UNION.

PRICE 2D.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 1799.

No. XII.

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE KINGDOM OF IRELAND:

THE day is fast approaching, which is to decide your political existence for ever—to decide, whether you are to retain the proud right of forming a national representative, subject to national controul, to continue the depositaries and guardians of the national liberties of Ireland; or, sunk to the burghers of a petty corporation, to enjoy the little privilege of sending your insignificant quota into the parliament of another country, there to swell the full stream of ministerial influence, or to be borne down by the overpowering torrent of opposing interests. The day, I say, which is thus to determine whether the electoral body of the kingdom of Ireland, shall be annihilated, is at hand—and yet you are silent!—There is a degree of insult, that, for the moment, overcomes indignation—and injury may rise to that height, that resentment may, for a time, be lost in amazement, or silenced in horror. That such an effect should have been produced on the minds of a gallant people, who, after having gloriously maintained their ground against the most formidable combination of foreign and domestic foes, are now told they are not fit to be trusted with the direction of their own affairs—told that the independence which they had so bravely vindicated, against the common enemy, they must now surrender to British aggrandizement—told this by the very nation, for which, no less than for their own, they had fought and bled—and told this at a time when the country is avowedly placed under military controul; troops received for the purpose of protection, manifestly continued for the purpose of intimidation—and others daily pouring in, with an evident view to clear away such doubts as may yet hang upon the question of an Union;—That such an effect, I say, should, under such circumstances, have been wrought upon your minds, is far from matter of surprize; still less does it furnish cause of wonder, when it is considered in what way this degrading measure has been introduced, and by what means it has been promoted;—announced in a publication confessedly official, with the accompaniment

of arguments tending to re-kindle the flames of party discord; and thereby clearly evincing the policy that has for years back been preparing the nation for such arguments—whilst our great men are clandestinely drawn over one by one, through the secret suggestions of the British minister;—thus with terror as the argument to the people, and something less offensive, but not less forcible, addressed to the parliamentary leaders, aided by divisions studiously kept up to prevent the different classes of the community from conferring for the benefit of the whole, is a measure involving every thing that can be dear to a free people, proposed and forwarded; whilst you are desired freely and calmly to discuss its merits, and in the same breath commanded to receive the great advantages it is to bestow. When insult has thus combined with treachery, to rob you of your rights, and the nation of its independence, it is, I repeat it, far from matter of wonder, that a momentary silence, the mixed result of astonishment and horror, should have on your part, succeeded the disclosure of so flagitious a plan; but it is time that this stupor should pass away; and that the natural feelings of a just indignation should have vent. Remember, I beseech you! that in a case of such perilous moment, not an instant should be lost; the nation must decide now, or the question will be decided for it. It is true, the policy of the proposers, whilst it has announced the measure, has withheld the conditions; and you are told, that to discuss the question of Union, while you are ignorant of the terms, is to talk of you know not what; that it is in the true logic of our country, to come to the conclusion, without once enquiring about the premises; the shallowness of this artifice, is an additional insult; the framers of it are well aware, that when the measure, with its detailed conditions, has come before parliament, your interference will be too late—the silence of the people will be argued into acquiescence—at least, the general principle of Union will be held as conceded, and the ignorance of specific conditions, will then be mocked as an idle plea, perhaps by the very persons who now urge it in bar of deliberation—and with reason, for admitting even that any conditions, morally speaking, could outweigh the mischiefs, how far are those that we may expect, likely to be favourable? Look to the critical juncture that has been seized for the proposal of the measure, and the answer presents itself;—in the moment of distraction we are called on to deliberate; in the phrenzy of mutual exasperation, we are invited to confer; under the *protection* of British troops we are summoned to negotiate a treaty with Britain; and does equity,

then, demand the aid of violent passions to enforce its claims? Is intimidation the usual harbinger of beneficence? That people surely must be more than Boeotian, that requires to be frightened or forced into a just sense of its obvious interests. France indeed has had the glory of compelling the blessings of liberty and fraternizing incorporation at the point of the bayonet. Can it be necessary to the happiness of these countries that she should be disturbed in that pre-eminence? The patriotic secretary says, yes. But still we are told, the terms *will* be favourable. Granted, for sake of argument. What then? Against terms the most favourable that Britain can offer, I do not scruple to protest. Let not your honesty and good sense, my brother electors, be made the dupes of Castle chicanery; this, I affirm, cannot be considered a question of terms; to represent it as such, has been the little trick of those who, whilst they concealed the terms, hoped to cajole you into inaction, and to keep back that expression of your will, which they well knew would be ruinous to their cause. Look to the glaring features of the measure, and judge whether any terms can correct their hideous and disgusting deformity: The surrender of our Parliament—the consequent abdication of our national will—the increased burden of taxation and debt—the extinction of all responsibility—the certain emigration of our gentry—the foreign education and consequent estrangement of our youth—the influx of a new and overwhelming influence, absorbing all the rewards of professional ability and exertion—our metropolis dispeopled—our university deserted—our professions disgraced—and our people disheartened. These, I say, are the essential and inherent characters of this tremendous change; and shall we yet bear to be told, that this is a question of terms? are these effects that I have enumerated the necessary results of an Union? If they be, shall we enquire what may be the terms that shall modify NATIONAL RUIN? But still we are told, that the extension of our commerce, and the establishment of our tranquillity, will operate in counteraction, or at least, in compensation of these evils? That such evils are beyond the reach of compensation is too plain for proof, and in the prediction of their counter-action we will not surely seek an equivalent for the positive and immediate sacrifices we are called on to make. But in what way are commerce and tranquillity to flow from the projected measure? Do not the confessions of all who are conversant in Irish trade clearly evince that its state since the establishment of Irish independence has been eminently prosperous and progressive*? Do not the reasonings and

decisions of our best informed merchants evince with equal clearness that its prosperity can receive no accession from what Great Britain can bestow? Does not the father of Irish trade, that distinguished commoner, to whose opinion the Irish merchant should peculiarly look up with grateful reverence, does he not by his disinterested and peremptory rejection of the proffered benefits of the Union, declare in the strongest terms his sense of its injury to Ireland? And are you then to be cajoled with the sound of commercial gain? As little will you be imposed on by the empty promise of national tranquillity? Should even the measure pass without exciting national convulsion; nay more, admit the possibility that a project, whereby all parties and descriptions are to be degraded, should produce a temporary calm, yet that it will be but the calm that precedes the tempest, and which will ultimately explode in violent division of the sister kingdoms—every intelligent and honest man amongst us must see and deplore! In the disgust of the loyalist, and the exultation of the traitor, already too visible, we may discern this calamitous issue. In the nature of the case, *if the nation shall be tricked out of its independence*, he must discern it as a necessary consequence; and in this light, peculiarly it is, that as subjects breathing the warmest sentiments of loyal affection to our gracious Sovereign, and ready, as you have lately proved, to lay down your lives in support of the present constitutional connexion with Great Britain, you are most powerfully called on to resist the present measure as destructive to the interest of Ireland and the empire. You see then that to hold out tranquillity and commerce in exchange for our independence and increasing prosperity, is but a mockery of the nation: It is to offer what is at best but uncertain and speculative and remote, in place of what is certain and practical and immediate—It is to offer what, if certain and immediate, would not prove an equivalent—It is to offer as necessarily connected with an Union, what is but incidental to it, in as much as no one expedient can safely be adopted for the accomplishment of either object in the event of an Union, that may not with equal safety be resorted to without it. But above all, it is to offer, that as the effect of an Union, the very reverse of which is to be dreaded as its natural result. And is it, after all this, pretended that you have not sufficient data whereon to ground your decisions? to such sophistry, I have no doubt, it is in a good measure to be attributed, that those decisions have been hitherto withheld; but its impositions are too manifest longer to mislead your judgment. You will not disgrace the characteristic sagacity of your county, by allowing men, whose understandings are in-

* In the Lord Chancellor's speech, on the motion made by Lord Moira in the Irish house of Lords, it is expressly asserted, that during the last twenty years "there is not a nation on the habitable globe, which has advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and in manufactures, with the same rapidity."—Vide speech published by authority, P. 4; again in P. 45, speaking of the value of linen exported from Ireland, even under the pressure of the war, he states it to have been "from 1792 to 1795 inclusive, 11,662,155," that is "2,200,000 over and above the amount of it in the four corresponding years prior to the war;" and the value of the export in 1796, he states to be vastly greater "than it ever had amounted to in any one year, since the linen manufacture was first established in Ireland;" and

again in p. 47, speaking of the trade of the kingdom, he states from official documents "that on a comparative view of the trade of Ireland, exports and imports, during eight years, ending at Lady day 1797, there is an accruing balance in her favour of more than 6,540,000l.; and the increase of her tonnage has been 17,872 tons in the same period; "this is the country," his Lordship properly adds, "that is to be represented as sinking under the weight of misgovernment! This is the country which the Sovereign is to rescue from impending ruin, only by a radical parliamentary reform!"
 † It can be scarcely necessary to mention that the Speaker is the eminent character here alluded to.

ferior to your own, to defraud you of your electoral right by the impudent pretence that the exercise of it is too early, until it shall be too late. No, my fellow electors, you are as little in danger from the weakness that would expose your dearest privileges to so barefaced a pilfer, as from the wickedness that would abdicate them by a deliberate and voluntary surrender. Let me then entreat you instantly to snatch the opportunity of entering through the medium of your representatives a national protest against this ruinous measure. Remember that if you do not seize the present occasion of communicating with your parliament, you thereby as far as in you lies determine that you never shall have another. Remember also, that this is above all questions that can be made the subjects of parliamentary deliberation, peculiarly a question of the people. The powers of parliament it is not necessary to discuss. To scrutinize them with theoretical severity in cases of ordinary moment is unbecoming; in the present case it would be superfluous. That they have some limit is certain. The point beyond which they *cannot* pass the plain principles of the constitution, and the ordinary suggestions of common sense manifestly define. The omnipotence of the parliament *acting within the great lines of the constitution*, every loyal subject must be resolute to maintain, but the magic of that word cannot change a trust into a property; cannot transform freemen into slaves; and a parliament, that in a matter affecting its own existence, and the established rights of a free people, should decide upon their surrender, without the clear and unbiassed expression of national consent, must be deeply responsible for the consequences of a violated constitution. On this ground it is peculiarly proper, as well as necessary, that the sentiments of the great constituent body of the nation should be explicitly announced. On other occasions parliament might deem, or affect to deem, your interference obtrusive. If partial, they might plead, that although appointed as local delegates, they become universal trustees; even when general they might contend, that though deriving their powers from you, they are constituted not the responsive organs of your will, but the discretionary guardians of your interests. Nay, I admit this to be just, when they take their stand upon the ground of the constitution, and would maintain its ancient bulwarks against the impetus of popular innovation; but in the present case in which our old constitution is to be relinquished, in which the very essence of the solemn trust reposed in the representative body is to be annihilated, you not only have a right to speak your determination, but in strictness, unless you do, no constitutional decision can be had. Beware, then, how your silence shall be interpreted; it surely, in a case like the present, with good reason, will be held a language expressive and peremptory. Already have some bodies exercised their constitutional rights, and others are proceeding to do so. In the instructions of the city and county of Dublin, and those of the University to their representatives, in the declarations of that learned and public spirited body, the Irish Bar, as well as of the liberal and enlightened merchants and bankers of the metropolis, the feelings of national dignity and substantial patriotism have been powerfully expressed. Shall we say, that these bodies are more in-

terested in the question than the nation at large? This has been insinuated by those whose interest it is to war with truth on the present momentous subject. The motives of this insinuation it is difficult to misunderstand, but the folly of it is not less conspicuous than its malice. To suppose that the great professions of the country should decay—that its University should droop—that the merchants of the metropolis should decline—and that the metropolis itself, and its vicinity, should waste away—and that the kingdom at large should experience no sensible injury from all this, is to suppose what is directly absurd. To insinuate that other trading towns shall rise upon the downfall of the capital, and thence to urge to *them* the advantage of the measure, is an insult, at the same time, to their understanding and their morals. Common sense rejects the notion—that to impoverish one part of a country will enrich the rest; and common honesty rejects the lure, that would set up the feeling of a sordid selfishness against the public weal. Admitting then, even that a regard to their local interests could have solely influenced the decisions of the great bodies of the metropolis and its vicinity, would it be wise, or honourable, on that ground to reject their example, connected as their interests must be with those of the nation? But these bodies have not been led by local considerations on this momentous question; they know full well, that in a general result of increased prosperity, (if such were to be the consequence of an Union) they must eventually participate in full proportion. The riches and comforts of a state cannot long remain accumulated in one part of a country; but like the waters which fertilize the soil, will fall through the lower grounds, until they have found their level, by general diffusion. No: the views of those informed bodies are not to be circumscribed by the narrow limits which the habitual meanness of cattle sycophancy so well used to adjust to its own groveling pursuits, presumes to prescribe to them in the present instance;—they have come forward on this, as they have done on former occasions, with promptness, from the nature of the case. At the source and fountain head of public intelligence; exercised in habits of reflection; from numerous concurrence, and frequent collision, continually employed in the discussion of public concerns; acting in a scene of constant activity and exertion; the proceedings of government daily and hourly passing before their eyes, and submitted, as it were, to their immediate inspection and animadversion, it is not wonderful that the residents of the capital, and its vicinity, should have been the first to debate and decide on this important question. Let me ask, is this the single case in which the metropolis has taken the lead? Look to the establishment of the never to be forgotten volunteer army of Ireland; look to other public and great occasions. Was it the corrupt and local views of the gentlemen of the bar, and of the merchants and inhabitants of Dublin, and its neighbourhood, that led them at the moment of national danger, to fling up all their domestic enjoyments, and encountering all the hardship of military service, to set the example of a yeoman institution, to which alone we are at this moment indebted for our existence as a people. Look to every nation, and see whether the metropolis is not the first to take the alarm on every public shock. See whether

it has not usually set the example of public spirit, and whether its vigilance has not usually proved the safeguard of national freedom. But to the example of these bodies that have openly deliberated on the question of Union, the singular and novel situation of this country at the present day, attaches a peculiar value. A visible proof has been hereby exhibited, that there no longer exists an obstacle to the constitutional meetings of the people. I am well aware, that in those districts of the kingdom in which military law has been enforced, (and, strange to say, in some parts, trials by court-martial do at this moment prevail) it has been generally believed, that all assemblies of the people, convened even in their electoral capacity, and for constitutional objects, are subjected to the control of military power; and to this strange notion, joined to an equally strange misconception of the convention act, I have little doubt that the silence of many counties is, in some degree to be imputed. Yes, my brother electors, from the erroneous opinion on this head, which some have taken no small pains to encourage, do the partizans of the minister expect their principal advantage, from your panic, and your misapprehensions alone do they hope success; but the array of military force cannot face down the constitution. While that lasts no power can wrest from you the privilege of meeting to restrict those whom you have appointed your parliamentary guardians. Military jurisdiction interferes not with your electoral rights, it neither can, nor dare; and the convention bill, as appears both from the express declaration of Lord Clare, and from the words of the bill itself, whilst it guards against unlawful assemblies of *delegated* bodies undermining and usurping the powers of parliament, most carefully and explicitly provides, that the ancient and undoubted right of petition and remonstrance, should remain unimpaired—but if any be yet so cautious, or rather so timid, as to seek still farther satisfaction, on this head, it is now furnished by the actual exercise of that right, without disturbance or objection, under the very eye of the supreme civil and military power. One difficulty, I am aware, yet remains to impede your collective deliberations—the sheriff of a county may be base enough to refuse compliance with the wishes of the Electors; that this treacherous abuse of the authority of this officer, has already been employed in some cases, to defeat the honest intentions of the freeholder, there is reason to believe—but need I remind you, that his authority has no legal controul over the exercise of your undoubted right to assemble in your counties, for the purpose of instructing your representatives. This right depends not for its exertion, on the permission of any officer whom the crown appoints. One word more, and I have done—when you assemble to deliberate, let me remind you that the magnitude of the question demands from you the most serious and temperate demeanour—the dignity and firmness of your proceedings, will, I trust, be such as to silence the most unblushing calumniators of liberty—let the glorious cause of national independence, which summons you to discussion, animate you with sentiments truly worthy of it—tumult and trepidation would ill besit a nation demanding its rights—passion, like ma-

levolence, is the child of weakness—in a great people, knowing their power to be commensurate to their rights, it can have no place—Speak, then, with calmness, but with decision, and corruption will shrink from the sound—Speak, and you must be heard!

A FELLOW-ELECTOR.

To the INHABITANTS of this CITY

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

AS it is now certainly known that the measure of incorporating this kingdom with Great Britain, will this day be either directly or incidentally submitted to parliament, we hold ourselves bound, as friends to good order, and enemies to this measure, to impress on the public, the impropriety of violence or commotion. Let not the phrenzy of resentment, or the giddiness of sudden feeling, prompt to any act, which may tend to overawe the deliberations of parliament, or give a reason for introducing a military force, to protect the representative body from the people. If there exists a conspiracy against the independence of the legislature of this kingdom, let the conspirators find no precedent, in the mistaken zeal of Irishmen. Be not deceived into the opinion that one vote can be influenced against the measure, by popular disturbance. No! But the fury of a mob may furnish an argument to those who can in no other way, than by the pretence of resisting it affect independence. Firm and conscientious men may be forced by popular threats to incline against the popular cause, and to those who are false and designing, the merit of opposing tumult, may afford a plausible excuse for their conduct. Never yet did a riotous assembly serve the cause for which it was collected; but it frequently gave a pretext to the governing power, to strengthen its hands, and enforce its measures—Let the example of Scotland be a warning to us—The people of Edinburgh rose in all their power against the parliament. History relates the event—“The privy council issued a proclamation against riots—commanding all persons to retire from the streets, whenever the drum should beat, ordering the guards to fire upon those who should disobey this command, and indemnifying them from all prosecution for maiming and slaying the subject.”*

Let us remind you, that great and dreadful as the calamity is, with which you are threatened, it is yet but a prospect—It may, and we trust will, be prevented by that powerful band of patriotic legislators, who, we know, are ready to resist this daring and insolent attack on the constitution of our country. That the exertions of those men—that the general indignation which it is now apparent the whole country entertains, and which has been in so many instances, already declared against the measure, in a constitutional way—will ultimately defeat the attempt, and overwhelm its authors in everlasting infamy—we have no doubt, provided the public opinion continues to declare itself in the same bold, yet constitutional, the same manly and firm, tho’ pacific and orderly manner, in which it has hitherto spoken.

* Smollet—vol. 2.—p. 92.